

National Parks, Tribal Tourism and Indian Arts & Crafts

Meeting Report - March 16, 2011

National Park Hospitality Association Annual Meeting Session at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA), Indian Arts and Crafts Board within the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) met together for the first time to discuss "National Parks, Tribal Tourism and Indian Arts and Crafts: Opportunities for Progress." The session was held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, March 16, 2011.

AIANTA is a nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses organized in 1999 to promote Indian Country tourism. It serves as the liaison between Indian Country and governmental and private entities for the development, growth, and sustenance of Indian Country tourism.

The session highlighted current and potential cooperative efforts, made possible by a very strong overlap in visitors - domestic and international - who are seeking both park and Native American experiences.

National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) Counselor Derrick Crandall opened the session by crediting former National Park Service Director Bob Stanton, now Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior, with bringing together the three organizations and challenging them to do more than simply exchange information. The initial conversations excited all of the participants, Mr. Crandall told the group, and prompted plans for collaboration on two issues.

- The first strategy for linking the promotion of national parks with promotion of tourism opportunities on nearby tribal lands, including special programs and presentations on tribal tourism offerings at concessioner sites in parks and on concessioner websites.
- The second issue focused on adding value to genuine American Indian arts and crafts by linking these items with park visits, improving the labeling of such items, and to making concessioner-operated retail sites a visible and trusted channel for purchases of American Indian arts and crafts.

He then introduced Kevin Gover, Director of the National Museum of the American Indian. Mr. Gover said, "National parks, American Indians and cities are the top three things international visitors want to see and experience when they come to the U.S." The Museum will promote this effort, he added, because "it's an obvious partnership and fabulous idea." Mr. Gover added that his prior service as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs had given him even more reason to cheer the linkage of national parks and American Indian efforts.

Bob Stanton also provided introductory remarks, saying, "We must preserve the richness and diversity of America. We are one nation and one people. Together, part of our mission is to foster and promote the American Indian culture including authentic American Indian arts and crafts."

The session included two wonderful panels. The first addressed ways to deliver outstanding visitor experiences linked to both parks and tribal offerings. Speakers included moderator of the first panel was Don Chapman, Senior Advisor on Native American Affairs to the Secretary of Commerce. Panelists were Edward Hall, Bureau of Indian Affairs Transportation Specialist and Tourism Coordinator; Sammye Meadows, American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) Public Lands Outreach Coordinator; Cindy Ognjanov, President of Glacier Park, Inc.; and National Park Service (NPS) Montana/Wyoming State Coordinator John Keck.

The second panel explored building visitor interest in and understanding of genuine Indian art through national parks. Moderator John Keck, Montana/Wyoming State Coordinator with the National Park Service led the discussion with Bob Stanton, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Department of the Interior; Charles Harwood, Deputy Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission and Ruthe Blalock Jones, artist. Both Mr. Harwood and Ms. Jones are Commissioners on the Indian Arts and Crafts Board serving as panelists.

The utility of collaboration was apparent from the afternoon discussions and NPHA, AIANTA and IACB agreed to continue work on a pilot project and future meetings.

A recap of the panel sessions follows:

Panel One: Delivering Outstanding Visitor Experiences Linked to Both Parks and Tribal Offerings

The moderator of the first panel was Don Chapman, Senior Advisor on Native American Affairs to the Secretary of Commerce. Panelists were: Edward Hall, Bureau of Indian Affairs Transportation Specialist and Tourism Coordinator; Sammye Meadows, American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) Public Lands Outreach Coordinator; Cindy Ognjanov, President of Glacier Park, Inc.; and John Keck, National Park Service (NPS) Montana/Wyoming State Coordinator. Mr. Chapman said his office focuses on tourism and economic development issues as well as intellectual property protection for Indian artisans. (Moderator questions are in bold).

How do you engage tribes?

- Ms. Ognjanov said that the all of Glacier Park lies within traditional Blackfeet lands and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation borders the park to the east. She told the group that an American Indian tourism company is the only other provider of public transportation along the Going-to-the-Sun Road, which passes through the heart of Glacier National Park over the Continental Divide. Her

company and Sun Tours work closely together, with Glacier Park, Inc. offering travel via historic red tour buses called "jammers" and Sun Tours offering a Blackfeet perspective tour concentrating on Glacier's natural features relevant to the Blackfeet Nation. The two companies are collaborating on a new series of Native American Interpretive Tours. She also showed the Montana tourism agency's [Glacier Country brochure](#) promoting native Indian events and arts and crafts.

- Mr. Keck described NPS efforts to aid American Indian communities through improved transportation, tourism and interpretation and outlined efforts underway to produce a formal agreement with AIANTA soon.
- Ed Hall replied that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funds many AIANTA efforts to help share information nationally and the BIA also provides umbrella marketing by attending ITB in Berlin and promoting tribal itineraries in ITB's publication "[Discover Native America](#)."

How do you "co-educate" each other on the opportunities for collaboration?

- Ms. Meadows said tribes participate in programs at national parks through the NPS Tourism Office and plan a significant role in the NPS Centennial in 2016. She also said AIANTA has met with the Western States Tourism Policy Council and a memorandum of understanding is pending, in which NPHA could be included. AIANTA is a nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses organized in 1999 to promote Indian Country tourism. She also said the new NPS website will be key to expanding Native Indian marketing and messaging.
- Mr. Hall noted that tourism is economic development – badly needed in Indian communities. Tourism offers a powerful opportunity for American Indians to tell their stories and motivates tribal leaders to put their stories, traditionally passed down orally, into writing to teach a new generation how to share their history. "It needs to be known at home first," he noted, "before we can tell it externally."
- Mr. Keck agreed saying the NPS shares a common goal to share relevant stories. He also reported that he held a meeting of its National Tourism Council in Denver to discuss priorities and collaborative projects. One outcome is that the NPS Civil War Sesquicentennial effort will include a focus on the role American Indians played in the war.
- Ms. Ognjanov also agreed with Mr. Hall and noted that Glacier's fireside talks called "[Native American Speaks](#)" are very popular. She also said they have begun to include meetings with Native Americans as part of their employee orientation program.

How can technology serve as a better tool?

- Ed Hall said the BIA is working with Environmental Systems Research Institute to provide data management software in a GIS format to support tribes and the visitor industry.
- Ms. Meadows referenced the book *Enough Good People - Reflections on Tribal*

Involvement and Intercultural Collaboration 2003-2006 about the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial project. It contains 12 Points of Protocol for working with tribal communities. Coming soon will be a NPS-sponsored website page about tribal involvement in the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

- Mr. Keck stressed that technology is a tool, not a product, and that the only way technology is effective is through partnerships. These partnerships will be crucial, especially with federal budget cuts. The economic development component is linked to the memorandums of understanding being developed with the NPS.

What about American Indian education, the role of youth and good case studies?

- Ms. Meadows referenced three programs: a new training program with tribal colleges, AIANTA and the NPS Midwest office; the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation northeast of Phoenix, Ariz., which owns or operates many facilities that train native youth for a variety of jobs; and the Sante Fe Indian School.
- Ms. Ognjanov said there is a tourism program at Blackfeet Community College and a hospitality internship program at Glacier's properties.
- All the panelists stressed the importance of hiring American Indians to reflect true Indian Country to interpret and tell original stories and to develop website information, publications, or other reference material.

Informal discussion followed. Attendees discussed documenting specific case studies with NPS and the tribes that are useful and replicable. A Forum at the next AIANTA meeting was suggested.

Panel Two: Building Visitor Interest in and Understanding of Genuine Indian Art Through National Parks

The moderator for panel two was John Keck, NPS Montana/Wyoming State Coordinator. Panelists were: Bob Stanton, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Department of the Interior; Charles Harwood, Deputy Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, and Indian artist Ruthe Blalock Jones. Both Mr. Harwood and Ms. Jones are Commissioners on the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB).

What are the primary impediments to working together?

- Mr. Harwood said sourcing authentic Indian arts and crafts may take more work, but is worth the extra effort. He also said concessioners should market the experience, not just put an item on a shelf to sell. The objective is to promote the value added for a visitor to own authentic Indian arts and crafts.
- Mr. Stanton said the Interior department also had work to do internally with staff given there are challenges in addressing past atrocities committed.

- Mr. Stanton reminded everyone that the partnership is ideal because concessioner contracts contain a provision that exempts the revenue derived from the sale of appropriately labeled authentic native handicrafts from the concession contract's franchise fee. He referenced the Indian [Arts and Crafts Act of 1990](#) to use as the guideline for rules on labeling and determining what is authentic.
- He called upon Indian Arts and Crafts Board Director Meredith Stanton who clarified that the Act allows concessioners flexibility — they are *not limited* to promoting only native arts and crafts tied to the geography of the park where they are located.

How can incentives work and what are the challenges?

- The panelists suggested increased use of the IACB guide to Indian artists and craftsman, available online, and the AIANTA directory.
- There are 36 tribal colleges and outreach to young artists and inventors has high potential.
- Mr. Harwood said efforts have improved to identify native Indian designs and trace them to specific tribes or persons.
- Ms. Blalock-Jones said originally, Indian art designs were ornamental or ceremonial and used by a particular tribe — items were not for sale — and over the years the specific origins of some art or designs may have been lost. Attribution is not always possible. This is a challenge.
- Mr. Harwood said both IACB and the FTC work to education sellers and buyers. If a design is non-attributable, there is a certification program as an option for artists to demonstrate the arts or crafts are made today with 100% Indian labor.

Finale at Museum of the American Indian

A reception followed the panels in the Museum's Patrons Lounge, offering a sweeping view of Washington from the U.S. Capitol to the White House. Guests enjoyed a special menu of cuisine items based on native American ingredients especially prepared by the museum's "Mitsitam" café Executive Chef Richard Hetzler. The name means "Let's eat!" in the Native language of the Delaware and Piscataway peoples. The ambiance, view and cuisine were a perfect finale to a great meeting.

For more information, contact the NPHA at 202-682-9530.

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